

## Final Evaluation Report

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We ask all grant recipients to complete a project evaluation that helps us to gauge the success of your project. This must be sent in **MS Word and not PDF format**. We understand that projects often do not follow the predicted course but knowledge of your experiences is valuable to us and others who may be undertaking similar work – remember that negative experiences are just as valuable as positive ones if they help others to learn from them.

**Please DO NOT fill in and submit this form until the project has been completed.**

Complete the form in English. Note that the information may be edited before posting on our website.

Please email this report to [jane@rufford.org](mailto:jane@rufford.org).

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Your Details	
<b>Full Name</b>	Thamara Fariñas Torres
<b>Project Title</b>	Gatos Bravos: conserving the most endangered small felids in La Rioja, Argentina
<b>Application ID</b>	44065-1
<b>Date of this Report</b>	November 15, 2025

**1. Indicate the level of achievement of the project's original objectives and include any relevant comments on factors affecting this.**

Objective	Not achieved	Partially achieved	Fully achieved	Comments
<p>Create awareness about small cats in local communities</p>		X		<p>We carried out various activities with neighbors, schools, and educational institutions in the area. We have been well received and welcomed in the project. However, given the direct complications arising from the conflict with carnivores and the low-income residents of these areas, it has been difficult to establish new projects. Likewise, due to bureaucracy, we have not been able to carry out as many activities in schools as we would have liked.</p> <p>We held two workshops in Vinchina and Jague. And one visit to Jague primary school. We also participated in three outreach events in the capital city of La Rioja and the towns of Anillaco and Los Molinos. The workshops involved approximately 50 people, the visit to the elementary school involved 15 students, and the outreach activities involved approximately 200 people.</p> <p>During the November trip, a public talk was also given at the Quyllur Ñan Provincial Archaeological Museum, with the participation of neighbors and 40 students of the Natural Areas Management and Park Rangers Technician of the I.S.F.D and T.P. of Vinchina.</p>

			<p>Subsequently, these students also participated in a field practice. In march we gave a talk at the elementary school and with the residents of Jagüe to present the project and its initial results.</p> <p>The greatest threats identified to date are the development of the paved road that crosses the reserve, which represents an increased threat of roadkill, and the development of mining activity within the reserve. We have been notified of at least 10 exploration projects in the southern part of the reserve, which could represent significant changes to the environment in the area.</p>
<p>Identify the composition of carnivore communities in different habitats, and their variations under different environmental</p>		<p>X</p>	<p>We have obtained results on the composition of the carnivore community and other species present in the study area. We are currently beginning the environmental analysis process, while we hope to gather more data on the species that are the focus of our project.</p> <p>We completed the first year of sampling, during which a total of 28 camera traps were set up for a monitoring period of 9 months in two main areas: Laguna Brava Reserve and Sierra de Umango. These covered an altitude range from 1,600 to 4,450 meters above sea level and an approximate area of 21,000 hectares.</p> <p>In Laguna Brava we obtained approx. 67 thousand photos, with an</p>

			<p>sampling effort of 129 days of trap-nights). In Sierra de Umango y Mulas Muertas we obtained approx 44 thousand photos, with a sampling effort of 154 days of trap-nights.</p> <p>For our survey, we followed the trap placement protocol of the Andean Cat Alliance's 24/7 project. In addition, during the first sampling, we were accompanied by Dr. Mauro Lucherini, a member of the alliance, who collaborated with the placement and provided recommendations for it.</p> <p>So far, we have confirmed the presence of the following native mammal species:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Leaf-eared Mouse: <i>Phyllotis vaccarum</i></li> <li>2. Andean mouse: <i>Abrotrix andina</i></li> <li>3. Eileen's tuco tuco: <i>Ctenomys eileenae</i></li> <li>4. Andean cuis: <i>Galea comes</i></li> <li>5. Chinchilla rat: <i>Abrocoma</i> sp.</li> <li>6. High Andean chinchilla: <i>Chinchilla chinchilla</i></li> <li>7. Skunk: <i>Conepatus chinga</i></li> <li>8. Gray fox: <i>Lycalopex gymnocercus</i></li> <li>9. Red fox: <i>Lycalopex culpaeus</i></li> <li>10. Geoffroy's cat: <i>Leopardus geoffroyi</i></li> <li>11. Northern pampas cat: <i>Leopardus garleppi</i></li> <li>12. Puma: <i>Puma concolor</i></li> <li>13. Guanaco: <i>Lama guanicoe</i></li> <li>14. Vicuña: <i>Vicugna vicugna</i></li> </ol>
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			<p>So far, we have not developed distribution maps for the species, as we are waiting to have all the data analyzed and, if possible, to add a new sampling area.</p>
<p>Create a series of outreach materials on small cat conservation</p>		X	<p>So far, we have created and distributed an informational brochure about the mammals in the study area, which was delivered to museums, local guides, and community centers. We have been told that it has been well received. We are working on a new brochure and reprinting the existing ones to send out again. In addition, we received a donation of some books from AGA to deliver to schools.</p> <p>So far, 200 brochures have been distributed, 100 to the association of women producers in Jague and 100 to the Vinchina Archaeological Museum. We are working on printing a new batch of this document and developing a new one focused on small cats.</p> <p>We received a donation of books published by AGA, which will be delivered to schools in Jague and Inchina during an upcoming visit. We are also evaluating the possibility of placing posters and photographs in the Vinchina museum.</p> <p>We still aim to develop coexistence plans, but we have yet to identify areas where the species are distributed, as well as requests from neighbors regarding conflicts with pumas, which they consider to be a</p>

				<p>major problem.</p> <p>Next year, a report on the results will be submitted to the authorities of the Ministry of the Environment and local governments. We also plan to hold new workshops to present the results to the residents of Jague and Vinchina.</p>
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**2. Describe the three most important outcomes of your project.**

**a).** We have obtained records confirming the presence of the northern Pampas Cat (*Leopardus garpeppi*) in our study area, as well as Geoffroy's cat (*L. geoffroyi*) and other carnivore species that make up the guild. In addition, thanks to contributions from neighbors, we have identified new areas of possible presence of the Andean cat, which still need to be surveyed. We currently have two hypotheses regarding the lack of records of Andean potamobryons in the reserve. On the one hand, based on what is known about the species, it is possible that the local population of the species is extremely small, added to the fact that they are extremely elusive. On the other hand, we are considering the possibility that they may be present in areas higher than those surveyed so far and/or in less disturbed areas associated with the boundaries of San Guillermo National Park, which borders the southern part of the reserve. As already mentioned, we are currently dealing with bureaucracy and permits from the Ministry of Mining that will allow us to complete the surveys in this area.

**b).** During the first sampling carried out, we recorded the presence of populations of the Andean chinchilla (*Chinchilla chinchilla*), a species that is globally endangered and of which, to date, less than five locations are known in Argentina, with Laguna Brava being the southernmost population.

**c).** In addition to activities with local residents, this project has allowed us to establish collaborative work with various organizations, including the Andean Cat Alliance, the High Andean Chinchilla Project, and the Argentine National Parks Administration.

**3. Explain any unforeseen difficulties that arose during the project and how these were tackled.**

Until the moment, the difficulties in carrying out the project can be divided into four aspects.

- Bureaucracy: we have encountered bureaucratic delays in obtaining research authorization for the province of Catamarca. While in La Rioja, we already have

this permit, we have encountered restrictions imposed by the mining development authorities for certain areas.

For this reason, we have decided to focus our efforts on covering the study area in the province of La Rioja more extensively in terms of time and area. In the meantime, we are trying to resolve the issue of obtaining permits.

- Economic aspects: given the economic situation that Argentina is going through, all our initial budgets have been devalued with respect to the current amounts due to inflation. Although we have purchased equipment for our study, this increase in costs will directly affect the number of areas we will be able to survey. To offset the effect of high inflation on logistics costs for the campaigns, we extended the duration of the sampling to reduce the number of trips. We also sought to involve fewer staff in the campaigns and to carry out intensive fieldwork in fewer days.
- Climate: given the climatic characteristics of our study area, we have some limitations to access sites of interest during winter and early spring, as we must wait for the snow to melt and the roads to be cleared and access some sites. On the contrary, in summer, our activity is affected by the extreme hot weather and the vacation season for both government agencies, technicians and others collaborators.  
Similarly to economic restrictions, in order to counteract adverse weather conditions, the time during which the cameras were active was increased. Installation and removal were carried out avoiding the most adverse dates to facilitate access to these areas when weather conditions were more favorable.
- Given the increase in mining exploration activity that is being carried out in our study area, it seems important to increase our efforts of survey, communication and institutional relations in this area, which will allow us not only to develop our project but also to present reports and conservation plans to the provincial authorities in charge of this area.  
This remains one of the biggest constraints we face. We are currently continuing to request permits from the authorities to travel in these areas, with the support of other government institutions and authorities. We hope to obtain these permits so that we can complete sampling throughout our proposed study area.

#### **4. Describe the involvement of local communities and how they have benefited from the project.**

We held meetings with the elementary school, tertiary education institute, and residents of the communities near the study area.

At these meetings, we were warmly welcomed by the residents, who actively collaborated by providing us with anecdotal records of felines and suggesting new sampling areas. In addition, residents and tertiary students participated in fieldwork as part of their training as local guides.

We provided local guides, community centers, and museums with informational brochures for distribution. We still need to deliver new materials to these centers and schools.

Additionally, we received concerns from neighbors about the conflicts they face with carnivores present in the area and the possibility of developing mitigation projects. This point represents an indispensable factor for continuing research in the area and seeking to meet local needs.

Two university students collaborated on this project: Miranda Ortiz and Luciana Naretto, university biology students participated as interns, collaborating in fieldwork in May and October 2025 and photograph labelling. In addition, presented a summary of partial results at the 2025 Argentine Mammalogy Conference.

To date, we have not conducted an assessment of residents' perceptions of small cats; we have only collected comments about them, which generally indicate that they are becoming increasingly rare. The communities showed interest in using these species for tourism (advertising, photographs, ceramic figures, and textiles for sale to tourists). They mentioned that the puma represents a much greater threat than small cats could ever pose.

#### **5. Are there any plans to continue this work?**

Yes, we are currently trying to organize a new survey campaign for the first half of 2026, which aims to cover new areas and revisit some of the sites where we have already obtained good results, in order to obtain more information about carnivore communities.

#### **6. How do you plan to share the results of your work with others?**

The results of this project will be shared on social media (Instagram: @gatosbravoslr), and we hope to give an in-person presentation to neighbors and schools in early 2026, as well as distribute informational brochures. In addition, the results will be published in a scientific journal.

Regarding the communication of results to date:

- We published notes with the information and activities of our project in the annual report of Geoffroy's Cat Working Group, and the 2025 spring edition of the Wild Felid Association newsletter to be published soon, and we are also to send a note to the The International Society for Endangered Cats (ISEC) newsletter 2025.
  - Fariñas Torres, T., Olmos, A. V., & Lucherini, M. (2025). Saltando por ahí: confirmación de poblaciones de la chinchilla de cola corta en La Rioja, Argentina. *Notas Sobre Mamíferos Sudamericanos*, 7(1).  
<https://doi.org/10.31687/SaremNMS25.1122>
  - Fariñas Torres T, Olmos A.V, Nieto C, Gonzalez P, Ortiz Arancibia T.M, Lucherini M. 2025. Primeros resultados del relevamiento de mamíferos con trampas cámara en la Reserva Provincial Laguna Brava, La Rioja. XXXVI Jornadas Argentinas de Mastozoología (JAM), SAREM, El Calafate, Santa Cruz, Argentina.
  - Ortiz Arancibia T.M, Naretto L.J, Olmos A.V, Nieto C, Lucherini M, Burgos E.F, Fariñas Torres T. 2025. Entre zorros y chinchillas: una liebre con agenda matutina XXXVI Jornadas Argentinas de Mastozoología (JAM), SAREM, El Calafate, Santa Cruz, Argentina.
  - Naretto L.J, Ortiz Arancibia T.M, Olmos A.V, Nieto C, Burgos E.F, Fariñas Torres T. 2025. El precocote rejudo en las alturas: Patrones de actividad e Phyllotis

vaccarum en Laguna Brava, La Rioja, Argentina. XXXVI Jornadas Argentinas de Mastozoología (JAM),SAREM, El Calafate, Santa Cruz , Argentina.

- Fernandez C.B, Fariñas Torres T, Sotomayor L.M.M, Chemisquy M.A. 2025. Relevamiento preliminar de los mamíferos en la zona de El Cantadero, La Rioja. XXXVI Jornadas Argentinas de Mastozoología (JAM),SAREM, El Calafate, Santa Cruz , Argentina.

## **7. Looking ahead, what do you feel are the important next steps?**

It is still necessary to complete the survey of the entire reserve, especially the areas where mining exploration is carried out. In addition, in order to continue with the support of the community, it is necessary to develop conflict mitigation projects that also include the support of local government. These projects should be developed independently but in parallel with the small cat survey activities.

## **8. Did you use The Rufford Foundation logo in any materials produced in relation to this project? Did the Foundation receive any publicity during the course of your work?**

Yes, the foundation's logo was included in all presentations to schools and communities, brochures, summaries presented at conferences, and tagged in all social media posts.

## **9. Provide a full list of all the members of your team and their role in the project.**

- Valeria Olmos, Field Technician, CRILAR-CONICET, full-time, participated in the November 2024 campaign and laboratory activities.
- Mauro Lucherini, Researcher, GECCM-INBIOSUR-UNS-CONICET, part-time, participated in the November 2024 campaign, and project planification.
- Carlos Nieto, Field Technician, CRILAR-CONICET, part-time, participated in the November 2024 campaign.
- Pedro Gonzales, Local Guide, Independent, participated in the November 2024 campaign, helped with logistic, site selection, and contacts with local residents and authorities.
- Miranda Ortiz, university biology student, I participated as an intern, collaborating in fieldwork and photograph labeling. In addition, I presented a summary of partial results at the 2025 Argentine Mammalogy Conference.
- Luciana Naretto, As a university biology student, I participated as an intern, collaborating in fieldwork and photograph labeling. In addition, I presented a summary of partial results at the 2025 Argentine Mammalogy Conference.

## **10. Any other comments?**

This report presents the first year of work on this project, for which we are aware that there is still much work ahead.

In addition to the form, we have attached a detailed document of the activities carried out and results obtained, as well as some photographs to illustrate them.

Our group is extremely grateful to the foundation for its support of this small project.

**ANNEX – Financial Report**  
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